

**from “Daring to Dream,”****by Vicki Van Meter with Dan Gutman**

Dreams can come true. Just ask Vicki Van Meter, 13. . . Vicki’s amazing adventures began with a simple wish: to become an astronaut.

To encourage Vicki’s soaring spirit, her father suggested that Vicki take flying lessons when she was ten years old. Less than two years later, Vicki became the youngest girl to pilot a plane across America! . . . The following summer, a new challenge called to Vicki: flying across the Atlantic Ocean. Vicki’s sixth-grade graduation was on June 3, 1994, and the next day she took off to pilot a plane to Scotland. . . . Since Vicki was too young to fly alone, an adult pilot accompanied her. . . . But Vicki did all the flying herself. [Here’s her] account. . . .

**DAY 2: TROUBLE**

We were a little over an hour into the flight when I noticed we were picking up some ice on the wings. If we kept going like that, the ice would become so heavy that the plane wouldn’t be able to fly. . . . I pulled back on the yoke, but the nose of the plane didn’t go up. Not a foot. We had waited too long.

There was no place to go but down. If we dropped below the clouds, the air would be warmer, and hopefully it would melt the ice.

I brought Harmony down to 7,000 feet, and then 5,000 feet, but the air was thick with clouds. I came down to 3,000 feet, then 2,000 feet, then 1,000 feet. Still there were clouds—and a real danger of crashing.

Finally, at 800 feet over the water, we broke out from the clouds. We kept going at 500 feet. Soon the ice was gone. The crisis was past.

**DAY 3: MORE TROUBLE**

The first hours were smooth, but then we found ourselves flying through clouds and I noticed ice forming on the wings. Not again!

I had to take Harmony all the way up to 13,500 feet before we popped out of the top of the clouds and the sun began to melt the ice.

Just as it’s risky flying too low, it’s also risky flying very high. The atmosphere surrounding the earth becomes thinner the higher you go. My body was having a hard time due to the lack of oxygen. I felt very tired suddenly, and found myself gasping for breath. . . . I had just about reached my limit when the coast of Scotland appeared in the distance. I brought the plane down and gulped air. It was over. . . . I had set a goal to fly a plane across the Atlantic Ocean, and I had done it. It felt great. Better than great. It felt awesome.